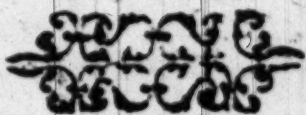




Merie Tales

Newly Imprinted
& made by Ma:
ster Skelton
Poet
Laureat.



Imprinted at London
in Fleetstreet beneath the
Conduit at the signe of S.
John Evangelist,
by Thomas
Colwell.



C. STEBENS.

Here begynneth certayne
merpe tales of Skelton,
Poet Lauriat.

How Skelton came late home to Dr-
ford, from Abington. Tale.i.



Skelton was an En-
glish man borne
as Skelton was,
and hee was edu-
cated & broughte
up in Oxforde:
And there was he made a Poete
Lauriat. And on a tyme hee had
ben at Abington to make mery,
wher that he had eate salte mea-
tes and hee did com late home to
Oxforde, and he did lye in an Inne
named y^e Taberne whiche is now
the Angell, and hee drd drynke &
went to bed. About midnight he
was so thyrstie oz drye that hee
A.ii. was

Merie tales of Skelton.

was constrained to call to the tapster for drinke, & the tapster harde him not, Then he crept to his oke & his othes, and to the colier for drinke and no man wold here hym, alacke sayd Skelton I shall perishe for lacke of drinke, what remainede. At the last he byd crie out and sayd fyer, fyer, fyer.

Then Skelton hard euery man bustling hym selfe upward, & some of them were naked, & some were halfe a sleepe and awake, and Skelton byd crie fyer fyer (Oyll) that euery man knewe not wherther to resorte. Skelton did go to bed, and the oke and oles & the tapster with the colier, byd wene to Skeltons chamber with candles lighted in theyr handes saying where : where, where, is the fyer, here here here, said Skelton
and

Merie tales of Skelton.

& poynted bys fyrger to bys mo-
uth, saying fetch me some drynke
to quenche the fyer and the heate
and the drynesse in my mouthe, &
so they dyd: wherfore, it is good
for euerye man to helpe bys owne
selfe in time of neede wythe some
policie or crafte, so see it there bee
no deceipt nor falschod bled.

¶ How Skelton dyest the Kendall
man, in the sweat time.



Aa time Skeltō rode
from Oxforde to Lon-
don with a Kendalina
and at Wybridge they
bepted: the Kendall
man layd bys cap vpon the bozte
in the hall, and he went to seten
bys horse: Skelton tooke y^e Ken-
dalynans cappe, and dyd put be-
twe

Merie tales of Skelton.

twirte the linyng & the bitter syde
a dishe of butter : and when the
Kendallman had dressed hys horse,
hee dyd come into tiner, and dyd
put on hys cappe, (that tyme the
sweating sycknes was in all En-
glande) at the last, when the but-
ter had take heate of the Kendall-
mans heade, it dyd begynne to
run ouer hys face and aboute hys
cheekes. Skelton sayde: sye, you
sweate soore: beware y you haue
not the sweatynge sycknesse: the
Kendallman sayde: by the Wyllie
Hewyng. Thus goe tyll bed
Skelton sayd: I am skild on phi-
sicke, & specially in the sweatynge
sycknesse, that I wpll warrant a-
ny man, In good faith saith the
Kendallman: do see, and He bay
for your skott to London. Then
sayde Skelton: get you a kerchiefe
and

Merie tales of Skelton.

and I wyll bryng you a bed, the
which was doone, Skelton cau-
sed the capp to bee sod in boate lee,
A dyed it: in the mornynge Skel-
ton and the Kendalman dyd ride
merely to London.

Howe Skelton tolde the man that
Chryst was very busye in the woodes
with them that made fagots. Tale.iii.

When Skelton
did cum to Lon-
don ther were
manye men at
the table at di-
ner. Amongest
all other there was one sayde to
Skelton: Be you of Oxforde, or
of Cambridge a scolar? Skelton
sayd: I am of Oxford. Syr sayde
the man, I will put you a questio
I.iiii. you

Merie tales of Skelton.


you do know wel that after christ
dyd rise from death to life, it was
.xl. dayes after ere he dyd ascend in
to heauen, and hee was but cer-
taine times wth hys Discyples,
and when that he did appeare to
them, hee dyd neuer tary longe a-
mongest them, but sodainely va-
nished from them, I wold fayne
know (saith the man to Skelton)
where Chryste was all these .xl.
dayes. Where hee was, saythe
Skelton, God knoweth, hee was
verie busie in the woods among
hys labourers that dyd make fa-
gottes to burne heretickes, & such
as thou art the whych doest aske
such diffase questions: but nowe
I will tell thee more: when hee
was not wth hys mother & hys
Disciples, hee was in Paradyce,
to comforte the holye Patriarkes
and

Merie tales of Skelton.

and Propets soules, the which
besce he had fet out of Hell. And
at the daye of hys Ascencion, hee
tooke them all vp wpth him into
heauen.

¶ Howe the Welshman dyd desyre
Skelton to ayde hym in hys sute to the
Kynge, for a Patent to sell dyynke.

The. iiii. Tale.

kelton when he was
in London, went to
the Kynge's Courte,
where there did come
to hym a Welshman,
saying: Syr, it is so, that manye
doeth come byp of my country to
the Kynge's Court, and some doeth
get of the King by Patent, a Cas-
sell, and some a Parke, & some a
foress, & some one fere, and some
A.v. another,

Merie tales of Skelton.

another, and they dooe lyue lyke
honest men, and I woulde lyue
as honestly as the best if I myght
haue a Dapne for good Dyncke:
Wherefore I dooe praye you to
write a fewe woords for mee in a
lytle Bpll to geue the same to the
Kynge's handes, and I will geue
you well for your labour: I am
contented. sayde Skelton. Syt
Dobne then sayde the welshman
and write. What shall I wyte
sayde Skelton? The welshman
sayde, wyte: Dyrake. Nowe
sayd the welshman wyte, more
Dyrake. What now sayde Skel-
ton? Wyte now: a great deale
of Dyrake. Nowe sayd the welsh-
man: Butte to all thys Dyrake:
I littell crome of Bzeade, and a
great deale of Dyrake to it, and
reade once agayne. Skelton dyd
reade


Merie tales of Skelton.

**reade: Drynke: more Drynke: &
a great Deale of Drynke: And a
lytle crone of breade: and a great
Deale of Drynke to it. Then the
Welshman sayde: Put out the
lytle crone of Breade, and sett in:
all Drynke, and no breade. And
if I myght have thys Signed of
the kynge, sayde the Welshman,
I care for no more as longe as I
dooe live. Well then, sayde
Skelton, when you have thys
Signed of the kyng, then wyl I
labour for a patent to have bread
that you wylth your Drynke, and
I wylth the Bread may fare well,
and seeke our livinge with bagge
and staffe.**

**¶ Of Swanborne the knave, that was
buried vnder Sainct Peters
wall in Oxford.**

There

Merie tales of Skelton.

 Here was dwelling in Ox
ford a stark knave, whose
name was Swanborn,
& he was such a notable
knave, that if any scoler had fallē
out thone woth thother: the one
woulde call thother Swanborn,
the whiche they dyd take for a
worsen woorde then knave: Hys
wyfe woulde diuers tymes in the
weeke kinde his head wth a.iii.
footed stoele: Then hee woulde
runne out of the doores wepinge,
and if anye man had asked hym
what he dyd aile, other whyle he
woulde saye he had the megreyn
in hys head, or ellis, there was a
great smoke wythin the house, &
if the doores were shut, hys wyfe
woulde beate him vader the bed,
or into the bench hole, & then he
woulde looke out at the cat hole,
then

Merie tales of Skelton.

then woulde his wife saye, lookest
thou out to horsemen: yea, woulde
he saye, thou shalt neuer let me of
my many lookes: then with her
distaff she would poore in at hym.
I kni to him when that he was a
boye in Crford, hee was a littell
olde feliotre, and woulde lye, as
fast as a horse woulde trotte. At
last hee dyed and was buried kn-
der the wall of s. Peters church,

Then Skelton was despyed
to make an Epitaphe vppon the
Churchewall, a dyd wyte wyth
a role, saying: **Bellabub his soule**
saue, *qui iacet hic hec a Knaue, iam scilicet,*
mortuus est, et iacet hic hec a Beast, Sepul-
crus est **amonge the weedes: God**
forgiue him his misdeedes.

Petre Skelton was complayned on to
the Bishop of Norwiche. Tale. li.

Skelton

Merie tales of Skelton.



Skelton dyd keepe a
Bulket at Dye, vpon
on the which he was
rom playned on to the
Bishop of Norwiche.

The Byshoppe sent for Skelton.
Skeltō dyd take two Capons: to
geue theym for a presente to the
Byshop. And as soone as hee had
saluted the Byshopp, hee sayde:
My Lorde, here I haue brought
you a couple of Capons. The
Byshop was blynde, and sayde:
Who bee you. I am Skelton
sayd Skelton. The Byshop sayd:
I boate head, I will none of thy
Capons: Thou keepest unhap-
pye rule in thy house, for the why-
che thou shalt be punished.

What, sayde Skelton: Is the
winde at that doore? And sayd:
God be with you my Lorde: and
Skelton

Merie tales of Skelton.

Skelton with his Capons went
hys way. The Bpshop sent after
Skelton to come agayne, Skel-
ton sayde. What Wal I I come a-
gayne to speake wythe a madde
man. At last hee retourned to the
Bpshop, wherhe sayde to hym: I
would, sayd the Bpshop, that you
shoude not lyue suche a sclaunder,
rouse lyfe, that all your parishe
shoude not wonder & complaine
on you as they doo, I pray you
amende, and here after lyue ho-
nestly, that I heare no more
suche wordes of you: And if
you wyl tarpe dynner, you shal
be welcome: and I thanke you
sayde the Bpshoppe for your Ca-
pons. Skelton sayde: My Lord
My Capons haue proper Na-
mes: The one is named Alpha,
the other is named Omega.

My

Merie tales of Skelton.

My Lorde, sayd Skelton: This Capon is named Alpha, this is the first Capon that I dyd ever geue to you. And this Capon is named Omega, and this is the last capon that ever I wil giue you. So fare you weil, sayd Skelton.

Howe Skelton when hee came from the bishop, made a Sermon. Tale. vii.



Skelton the nextte Sondag after wente in to the pulpet to prech. and sayde: *vos estis vres* that is to saye: you be. you be. And what be you, sayd Skelton: I saye, that you bee a sorte of knaues, yea, and a man might saye, worse then knaues. And

Merie tales of Skelton.

And toby, I shall shew you: you
haue complayned of mee to the
Bpshop that I doo keepe a fayre
wench in my house. I dooe tell
you: If you had any fayre wiues
it were some what to helpe me at
neede. I am a mā as you be: you
haue foule wyues, and I haue a
faire wenche, of the tobyche, I
haue begotten a fayre Boye, as
I doe thinke, and as you all shall
see: Thou tobye, sayde Skelton,
that hast my childe be not a fraid
bring me hither my childe to me:
the tobyche was doone. And he
shewynge his childe naked to all
the parische, sayde: How saye you
neighbours all: is not this childe as
fayre as is the beste of all yours?
It haue nose, eyes, handes and
feete as well as any of your, It
is not lyke a pygge, nor a ealse,
B.i. nor

Werte tales of Skelton.

no: like no soule, no: no monstrous
ous Beast. If I had, sayde Skel-
ton, broughte forth the thys chylde
without armes or legges: or that
it wer deformed being a monstra-
ous thynge, I woulde neuer haue
blamed you to haue complayned
to the bishop of me, but to cōplain
without a cause. I say as I said
before in my Antethem.

705
estis. you be, and haue be, & wyll
and shall be knaues to complayne
of me without a cause resonable.
For you be presumptuous, & dooe
exalte your selues, and therefore
you shall be made low: as I shall
shewe you a sampler example of
a Parish Priest, the whiche dyd
make a sermon in Rome. And he
dyd take that for hym ante them
the which of late dayes is named
a Theme, and sayde: *Quiesc exaltat
humilabitur, et quiesc humiliat exaltabitur,*

Perie tales of Skelton.

that is to say: he that doth exalte
him selfe or dothe extoll hym selfe
shalbe made meke, & he that doth
humble hym selfe or smeke, shalbe
exalted, extoulled or, elevated, or
sublimated or, such lyke, and that
I will shewe you by this my cap:
This cappe was fyrste my hood,
when that I was Studente in
Iucalico, & then it was so proude
that it woulde not bee contented
but it woulde slippe and fall from
my shoulders. I perceyvyng
thys that he was proude, what
then dyd I, woithly to conclude:
I dyd make of hym, a payre of
Breeches to my hose, to brynge
hym lowe. And when that I
dyd see, knowe or perceue that
he was in that case, and all mooste
woyne cleane oute: what dyd I
then to extoll hym byre agayne,
B.ii. you

Merie tales of Skelton.

you all may see that this my cap
was made of it that was my bree-
ches. Therefore sayde Skelton:
vos estis : Therefore you bidde I
dyd saye before: if that you exalte
your selfe, and can not be confu-
ted that I have my wrenche
still, some of you shall beare boy-
nes: and therefore *vos estis*, and so
farewell: It is merre in the hall,
when bearded wagge all.

How the Fryer asked leave of Skel-
ton to preach at Dye, which Skel-
ton wold not grant. tale. viii.

There was a Fryer which
dydde come to Skelton to
have licence to preach at Dye:
What woulde you preache there
sayde Skelton: Doe not you
lynke, that I am sufficiente to
preache

Merie tales of Skelton.

preach there in myne owne curie
S^r layde the frere: I am the
Lympter of Acworth, and once
a yere one of our place dothe vse
to preache wth you, to take the
Deuotion of the people, and if I
may haue your good wil so be it,
or els I will come and preach a-
gainst your will, by the authori-
tie of the B^yshope of Rome, for I
haue hys Bulles to preache in e-
uerie place, and therfore I wyl
be there on Sundaye nexte com-
yng. Came not ther^e frere I
dooe counsel thee, sayd Skelton
The Sundaye nexte followynge
Skelton layde watch for the co-
myng of the frere: And as sone
as Skelton had knowledge of
the frere, he went into the Pul-
pet to preache. At last, the frere
dyd come into the Churche with
B.iii. the

Merie tales of Skelton.

the Bishoppe of Rome's Bulles
in hys hande. Skelton then
sayd to all hys Parische: See, see
see, and pointed to the frere,
All the parish gased on the frere.
Then sayde Skelton: Maisters
here is as wonderfull a thyng,
as euer was seene: you all dooe
knowe, that it is a thyng darlye
scene: a Bulle dothe begette a
Calfe, but here contrarie to ail
nature: a Calfe hath gotten a
Bulle: for thys frere beeyng a
Calfe, hath gotten a Bulle of the
Bishoppe of Rome. The frere
beeyng ashamed, woulde neuer
after that tyme presume to preach
at Dps.

How Skelton handled the Fryer that
woulde needes lye with him in his
Inne. Tale. ix.

perie tales of Skelton.



A Skeltō ryd
into þ countre
There was a
frete that ha-
pened in at an
ale house wher
as Skelton
was lodged

and there the frete dyd desire to
haue lodgong. The alewife sayd:
syr. I haue but one bed wher as
master Skelton doth lye: syr sayd
the frete. I pray you that I maye
lye with you. Skeltō said: master
frete. I doo ble to haue no man
to lye with me. Sir sayd the frete
I haue lyne wyth as good men
as you and for my money, I doo
looke to haue lodgng as well
as you. Well, sayde Skelton,
I dooe see than that you wyll lye
with me. yea syr sayd the frete.

B.iii.

Skel

Merie tales of Skelton.

Skelton did fill all the cuppes in
the house and whittled the frere,
that at the last, the frere was in
myne eynes peason. Then sayde
Skelton mayster freere, get you
to bed, and I wyll come to bed
withyn a while, The frere went
and dyd lye vpright, and snozted
lyke a sow. Skelton wente to
the chaumber, and dyd see that
the freere did lye soe, sayd to the
wyfe: Geue me a washyng betle.
Skelton then caste downe the
clothes, and the freere dyd lye
stark naked: then Skelton dyd
wite vpon the freres Raul and
bellye: And then he did take the
washyng betle, and dyd strike an
harde stroke vppon the Raul &
bellye of the freere, and dyd put
out the candell, and went out of
the chaumber: the freere felt bys
bellye,

Merie tales of Skelton.

bellye, & smelt a foule savour, had
thought hee had ben goxed, and
cried out and sayde: helpe, helpe,
helpe, I am kyled. They of the
house with Skelton wente in to
the chaumber and asked what
the freere dyd ayle. The freere
sayde: I am kyled, one hath
thrust me in the bellye. So sayde
Skelton : thou drunken soule,
thou doost lye, thou haste besmyt-
ten thy selfe. So sayde Skelton
let vs goe oute of the chaumber
for the knave doothe synke. The
freere was a whamed, and cryed
for water. Out with the whores-
son, sayd Skelton, and wrap the
sheetes togyther, and putte the
freere in the hogge sty, or in the
Barne, The freere said, geue me
some water into the Barne, and
there the freere dyd washe him
B. A. selfe

Merie tales of Skelton.

selfe, and dydde lye there all the
nyght longe, The chamber and
the bedde was dyessed, and the
wretes wyfired, and then Skel-
ton went to bed.

¶ Howe the Cardynall desyred Skelton
to make an Epitaphe vpon his
grave. Tale. r.



Howe Wolsey Car-
dynall & Archbysop
of yorke, had made
a regall Tombe to
lye in after hee was
deade. And he desyred Master
Skelton to make for his Tombe
an Epitaphe, whiche is a me-
moriall to shewe the lyfe with the
Actes of a Noble man. Skelton
sayde: If it dooe lyke your grace
I canne not make an Epitaphe
vnieste

Merie tales of Skelton.

vnlesse that I do se your Tombe.
The Cardynall sayde : I dooe
praye you to meete wryth mee to
morrowe at the west Monestery
and there shall you se my tombe
& makinge, the pointu ent kept
And Skelton, Seyng the sumptuous
coste, more perraying
for an Emperoure or a Maryng
ous kynge, then for such a man
as he was (although Cardynals
wyl compare wryth kynge) well
sayd Skelton: If it shall like your
grace to creepe into this Tombe
whyles you be a lyue, I can make
an Epitaphe: for I am sure that
wher that you be dead, you shall
never haue it. The wyche was
verified of thatye.

Perie tales of Skelton.

Howe the Hostler dyd byte Skeltons Mare vnder the tale, for biting him by the arme. Tale. xi.



Skelton bled
much to ryde
on a mare. And
en a tyme hee
happened into
an Inne, wher
there was a fo-
llish Ostler. Skelton said: Ostler
hast thou any Mares bread. No
for, sayd the Ostler. I haue good
horsebread, but I haue no mares
bread. Skelton saide: I must ha-
ue Mares bread. So sayde the
Ostler. There is no Mares bred
to get in all the towne, Well, sayd
Skelton, for this once, serue my
Mare wth Horse bread. In the
meane tyme Skelton commaunded
the Ostler to saddle his Mare, &
the

Merie tales of Skelton.

and the Scheler dyd gyde th
Ware hard, and the Collet was
in his Jerkin, and his Witte ne
was bet above his elbowes, and
in the girding of the Ware hard
the Ware bite the Collet by the
arme, and bite him sore. The
Scheler was angry, and dyd bite
the Ware vnder the tayle, saying
a word, is it good byting by the
bare arme. Skelton sayde there
My fellowe haste thou hurt my
Ware, he sayde the Collet, ha
me ha it is. If the Ware butte me,
I will displease her.

¶ After the Collet tolde maister
Skelton, it is good sleeping
in a whole skinne.

Tale. xii.

In

Merie tales of Skelton.



D the Parryste
of Dys where
as Skelton was
Person, there
lived a cob-
ler, being halfe
a souter, which
was a tall man and a greute flo-
uen, otherwyle named a flouche,
The Kynges Maiesne haupnge
Warres by ponde the sea. Skel-
ton said to thys a forsayd Doughty
man. Neyboure, you be a tall
man, and in the Kynges warres
you must bere a standard. A stan-
derd, said the cobbler, what a thyng
is that. Skelton saide: it is a great
banner, such a one as thou doest
use to beare in Rogarpon weeke,
and a Lordes, or a knyghtes, or
a gentle mannes armes shall be
vpon it, and the Souldiers that
be

Merie tales of Skelton.

he vnder the afore sayde persons
fayghtynge vnder thy Banner:
fayghtynge, sayde the Cobbelet:
I can no skil in fayghting: no said
Skelton, thou shalte not fayght,
but holde vp, and aduance the
bāner. By my say, sayd the cobler,
I can no skill in the matter. Well
sayd Skelton there is no reamedie
but thou shalte forthe to dooe the
kynges service in hye warres,
for in all this Countrey there is
not a moze likerly manne to dooe
suche as feate as thou art. Spoke
sayde the Cobbelet: I wyll
geue you a fatte Capon, that I
maye bee at home. No, sayde
Skelton, I wyll not haue none
of thy Capons: for thou shalte
doe the kyng service in his wars.

why

Merie tales of Skelton.

Why, sayd the cobbler what shuld
I doo, wyl you haue me to goe
in the kynges warres and to bee
killed for my labour: then I shall
be well at ease, for I shall haue
my mendes in my own hands.
What knaue, sayd Skelton, art
thou a coward, haung so great
Bones? No sayde the Cobler.
I am not a fearde: it is good to
sleepe in a hole skynne. Why said
Skelton: thou shalt bee harnes-
sed to keepe away the strokes fro
thy skynne. By my fay, sayde the
Cobler, if I must needes foithe,
I will see howe yche shall bee or-
dered. Skelton dyd harnesse the
doughtye Squirell, and dyd put
an helmet on his head, and whē
the helmet was on the Coblers
heade, the Cobler sayde, What
shall these hoales serue for.

Skel

Merie tales of Skelton.

Skelton sayd holes to looke out
to see thy enemyes, yea, sayde
the Cobler, then am I in worser
case then euer I was: for then
one may come and thrust a nayle
into one of the holes and pryke
out myne eye. Therefore, said the
Cobler to Master Skelton: I
will not goe to warre: my wyfe
shall goe in my steade, for she can
fyghte and playe the Deuell wpth
her distaffe, and with stole, Raffe
cuppe, or candlesticke: for by my
say I chaunsicke, I chyll goe home
to bed, I thinke I shall dye.

How Master Skeltons Miller decey-
ued hym manye times, by playinge
the theefe, and howe he was pardo-
ned by Master Skelton, after the
stealinge a waye of a Priest oute of
his bed, at midnight. Tale. xiii.

C.i.

When

Perie tales of Skelton.



When Maister
Skelton dyd
dwell in the
countrey, hee
was a greede
with a Miller
to have hys corne grounde, tolle
free and manye tymes when hys
mayden shoulde bake, they wan-
ted of their meale, and complained
to their Wyfres that they could
not make their stint of breade.

Wyfres Skelton beeyng verye
angrye, to de her husbande of it:
Then Maister Skelton sent for
his Miller and asked hym howe
it chanced that hee deceyved hym
of his corne: I saide John miller,
ney surely I never deceyved you,
if that you can proue that by mee
doe it hee mee as you sayte, surely
sayd Skelton if I doe fynde thee
false

Merie tales of Skelton.

false anye more, thou shalt be han-
ged vp by the necke. So Skelton
appointed one of his seruantes to
stand at the mill while the corne
was a grinding. John myller be-
yng a notable theefe, would faine
haue deceyved him as he had don
before, but beyng afraid of Skel-
tons seruante, caused his wyfe
to put one of her chyldren into y^e
myll dam: and to crye help help,
my childe is drowned. with that
John myller and all went out of
the myll, & Skeltons seruante
being diligent to helpe the childe
thought not of the meale, and the
while the myllers wyfe was redy
with a sacke and stole awaye the
corne, so when they had taken vp
the childe and all was safe, they
came in agayne: & so the seruant
hauryng his gylte, went home

C.ii.

misstrust.

Merie tales of Skelton.

mistrustynge nothyng, and when
the maydes came to bake agayne,
as they dyd before so they lacked
of theyr meale agayne. After
Skelton calde for his man, and
asked him howe it chanced that
he was deceaved, & hee sayd that
hee coulde not tell, for I dyd your
commaundement. And then Ma-
ster Skelton sent for the Miller,
and sayde, thou hast not bled mee
wel: for I want of my meale: why
what wold you haue me do sayde
the miller, you haue set your own
man to watche mee. Well then
sayd Skelton, if thou dorst not tell
me whyth wexe thou hast played
the theefe wyth mee, thou shalt
be hanged. I praye you be good
master vnto me, & I wyll tell you
the truth: your seruant wold
not from my myll, & when I sawe
none

Merie tales of Shreton.

none other remedye I caused my
wyfe to put one of my chyldren in
to the water, & to crye that it was
drowned: and whyles we were
helpyng of the chylde out, one of
my boyes dyd steale your coyne.
yea, sayde Shreton: if thou have
suche pretie fetchis, you can dooe
more then this. And thetfore, if
thou dooest not one thynge that
I wailtell thee. I will folow the
lawe on thee. What is that, sayd
the Miller: If that thou dooest
not steale my cuppe of the table,
when I am sette at myne, thou
wilt not escape my handes. O
good Master, sayd John Miller,
I pray you forgeue me, and let me
not dooe this, I am not able to
dooe it. Thou wilt neuer be for-
geuen, sayde Shreton, without
thou dooest it. When the Miller
C.iii. sawe

Merie tales of Skelton.

sa to no remedye, he went & charged one of hys boyes. in an evening (when that Skelton was at supper) to sette fyre in one of hys bogges lies, farre fro any house, for doing any harme.

And it chanced, that one of Skeltons seruantes came oute, and spied the fire, and hee cryede: helpe, helpe: for all that my master hath, is lyke to be burnt. Hys master hearyng this, rose from hys supper with all the companie, and went to quenche the fyre. And the while John Miller came in: and stole away hys cuppe, & went hys way. The fire being quickly flaked, Skelton came in with his frendes, and reasoned wyth hys frendes which way they thought the fyre shoulde come, and euery man made answer as they thought good

Merietales of Skelton.

good. And as they were resonning
Skelton called for a cup of beere,
and in no wise his cuppe wherche
hee used to drynke in, would
not be founde, Skelton was verie
reuerent that his cup was in his
pige, and asked whiche waye it
shoulde be gone. And no manne
coude tell hym of it. At last he be
thought him of the Miller, and sayd
surely, he, that theefe hath done
this dedde, and he is worthy to
be hanged. And hee sent for the
Miller: so the Miller tolde hym
all howe hee had done. Truly
sayd Skelton, thou art a notable
knaue. And withoute thou canste
do me one other feate, thou shalte
dye. O good Master, sayde the
Miller, you promised to pardon
me, and wil you now breake your
promise? I sayd Skelton, wylth
C.iii. out

Merie tales of Skelton.

out thou canste make the shreves
of my bed, when my wyfe and I
ain a slepe, & thou shalt be hanged
that all sorte of knaves shall take
ensample by thee. Alas, sayde the
Miller, whiche waye shall I dooe
this thinge, it is impossible for me
to get them while you bee there.
Well, sayde Skelton, with oute
thou dooe it, thou knowest the
danger. The Miller went bys
way, being very heavy, & stude
whiche waye he myght doo this
deede, he haunge a little boye.
Whiche knewe all the corners of
Skeltons house, & where he lay.
Upon a night whē they were all
busie, the boye crept in vnder his
bed, with a pottle of yeste, and
when Skelton & his wyfe were
fast a slepe, he all to noynted the
sheetes with yeste, as fast as he
could

Merie tales of Skelton.

coude reache. At last Skelton a-
waked & felt the sheetes all wete,
waked his wife and sayd: what,
hast thou be witten the bed: and
she sayd naye, it is you that have
doone it, I thynke, for I am sure
it is not I. And so there fel a
great strife betwene Skelton and
his wyfe thinking that the bedd
had ben be witten, and called for
the mayde to geue them a cleane
payre of sheetes. And so they arose
& the mayde took the foule sheetes
and threw them vnderneath
the bed, thinkinge the nexte mor-
ninge to haue fetcht them away.
The next tyme the maydes shuld
goe to wasshyng, they looked all
about and coude not fynde the
sheetes, for Jakke the myllers boy
had stolen them away: then the
myllet was sent for agayne, to
C.v. know

Merie tales of Skelton.

knowe where the sheetes were
be come: & the Miller tolde may-
ster Skelton all, how he deuised
to steale the sheetes. Howe say ye,
sayde Skelton to hys frendes: is
not this a notable theef, is he not
worthy to be hanged, that canne
dooe these deedes. O good Mai-
ster, quoth the Miller, nowe for-
geue mee ac- & dpage to poute,
prounple, for I haue done all that
you haue commaunded mee, and
I trust now you will pardon me.
Aaye, quoth Skelton thou shalt
doo yet one other feate, and that
shall bee this: Thou shalt steale
maister Person out of hys bed, at
midnight, that he shall not knowe
where he is he come, The Miller
made great mone, and lamented
saying: I can not tel in the world
howe I shall doo, for I am neuer
able

Merie tales of Skelton.

able to dooe this feate: well, sayde
Skelton, thou shalt dooe it or els
thou shalt sende no fauour at my
hand. and therfore go thy way,
The Miller being sayde, creused
wileh wileise which way he might
bying this thing to passe. And. ii.
or. iii. nyghtes after, gathered a
number of Snayles, & agreed with
the Seren of the Church, to
haue the key of the Church dore
and went into the Church be-
tweene the hentes of a. x. and. xii.
in the night, & toke the snayles.
And lyghred a sorte of little waxe
candles, & set vppon euery snayle
one, & the Snayles crepte about
the Church woth the same can-
dels vpon their backs, and then
he went into the churche and put
a Cope vppon his backe & stode
very solemnely at the hye Altar
with

Merie tales of Skelton.

with a booke in hys hand, and
after ward he tolled the Bell, that
the Bredt hringe in the Church
yard might heare hym: the yung
hearyng the bell tolle, sterte oute
of his slepe and looked out of hys
windowe and sawe such a sight
in the Church. was very muche
amased, and thought surely that
the Church had ben on fire, and
wente for to see what wonder it
shoulde be. And when he came
there he founde the Church doore
open, and went by into the quier
and see the wiler standing in hys
bestementes, and a booke in hys
hand praying deuoutly, & all the
lightes in the Church, thought
surely with hym selfe it was some
Angell come Downe from heauen
or some other great miracle, blest
hed hym selfe and sayde: In the
name

Peric tales of Skelton.

name of the father the sonne and
the holy ghoste : What airt thou
that standest here in this holie
place, I sayde the Miller: I
am saynt Peter, whiche kepte the
keyes of heauen gate, and thou
knowest that none can entet into
heauen excepte I let hym in, and
I am sent ouer from heauen for
thee. for mee, quoth the priest:
Good saynt Peter, worship more
then be,) I am glad to heare that
newes,) Because thou hast done
good deedes sayd the miller, and
serued God, hee hath sent for thee
 afore doomes day come, that thou
halt not knowe the troubles of
worlde. O. blessed be God, sayde
the priest: I am very well con-
tented for to goe: yet if it woulde
please God to let me go home and
distribute such thyngs as I haue
to

Serie tales of Chelton.

to the poore, I woulde bee verye
glad. So sayde the Miller if thou
doest delite more in thy goodes,
then in the Joyes of heauē, thou
art not for God, therefore prepare
thy selfe, and goe into this bagge
which I haue brought for thee.
The miller hauing a great quar-
ter sacke, the poore Priest wente
into it, thynging verylee hee had
gon to heauen, yet was verp soyr
to parte from hys goodes: Asked
saynt Peter how long it wold be
ere he came therte: the miller sayd
he shoulde be there quickip, and so
he got the Priest and tied by the
sacke, and put out the lightes, &
layed euery thyng in their place,
and tooke the priest on his backe
& locked the church doores & to go,
and when he came to go ouer the
church stile, the Priest was verp
beauie

Ferie tales of Skelton.

beaure, and the Miller caste hym
ouer the stile that the priest cryed
of. O good saynt Peter sayde the
Priest, wher goe I nowe, O
sayde the Miller: These be the
pange & that ye must abyde be fore
ye come to heauen. O quoth
the Priest, I would I were there
once. Up he got the Priest agayn
& caried hym tyl hee came to the
toppe of an hye hyll, a litle from
hys house, and caste hym downe
the hyll that hys head had many
myre & rapps. that hys necke
was almost brist: O good saynt
Peter said the Priest: where am
I nowe: ye are almost nowe at
heauen, & caried hym with much
a doo, tyl hee came to hys chere
house, and then the miller threwe
hym ouer the thresholde. O good
saynte Peter, sayde the Priest:
where

Merle tales of Skelton.

Where am I now, this is the
foreste pange that euer I orde
I sayd that Millerage & I
thankes that thou hast had pa-
cience to a bide all this pange, for
nowe thou arte goyng vpp into
heaven, and tye a rope a bout
the sacke, and drowe hym vpp to
the toppe of the Chimney, and
there let him hange. O good S.
Peter, tell me nowe where I am
sayde the Priest. Harpe sayd he,
thou art now in the toppe of John
Millers chimney. A vengeance
on thee knave: sayde the Priest:
hast thou made me betwixe al this
while that I was goyng vpp into
heaven: Well, nowe I am here, &
euer I come downe again, I wil
make thee to repēt it: But John
Miller was gladd that hee had
brought hym there. And in the
morning

Merie tales of Skelton.

morning, the Sexten rang all in
to seruise, & when the people were
come to Church, the Priest was
lackynge, the parson asked the sex-
ten wher the Priest was, and the
sexten sayd, I can not tell. Then
the parson sent to master Skel-
ton, and tolde howe their Priest
was lacking to save them seruise.
Mafter Skelton mervayled at
that, and bethought hym of the
crafty dooynge of the Miller, sent
for John Miller: and when the
Miller was come. Skelton sayd:
to the miller: canst thou tell wher
the parson Priest is? The Miller
bp and told him all together how
he had doone. Mafter Skelton
considering the matter, sayde to
the Miller: why thou vntreueret
knaue, hast thou banled the poore
Priest on this fashion, and putte

D.I.

on

Merie tales of Skelton.

on the holly ornamēts vpon a knaues backe : thou shalt be hanged & it coste me all the good I haue. John miller fell vppon his knees and desyred Maister Skelton to pardon hym, for I dyd nothyng sayd the miller, but that yeu sayd you woulde forgeue me. Nay not so, sayd Skelton. But if thou canst steale my gelding out of my stable my two me watching him, I will pardon thee, and if they take thee they shall strike of thy heade : for Skelton thoughte it better that such a false knaue shoulde lose his head, then to liue. Then John miller was very sad, & bethought hi how to bring it to passe. Then he remembred that ther was a man left hanging vppon the galowes, the day before, wēt preuely in the nyght and tooke him downe, and
cut

Merie tales of Skelton.

cut of his head, and put it vpon a
pole & brake a hole into the stable
and put in a candle lighted: thus
lying in the head, a litle & a litle.
The men watching the stable se-
unge that, got them selues neare
to the hole (thinkinge that it was
his head, & one of them with his
sword cutte it of. Then they for
gladnesse presented it vnto their
master, leaunge the stable doore
open: then John Miller went in
and stole away the gelding.
Master Skelton looking vpon
the head, sawe it was the theues
head that was left hanging vpon
the gallopes, sayd: alas now ofte
hath this false knaue deceiued vs
So quickly to the stable agayne,
for I thinke my gelding is gone.
His me going backe agayn found
it even so. Then they came agayn
D.ii. and

Merie tales of Skelton.

and told it to his Maister, bys horse
was gone. Th I thought so you
doltish knaues said Skelton: but
if I had sent wise men about it, it
had not ben so. Then Skelton
sent for the miller, and asked hym
if hee coulde tell where bys horse
was. Sate ynough maister sayde
the miller: for hee tolde Skelton
all the matter how hee had done,
Well sayd Skelton, consydeyrng
bys tale, sayd, that he was wor-
thie to bee hanged: for thou doest
exceill all the thieues that ever I
knew or heard of. But for my pro-
mis sake, I forgive thee, upon
condition thou wilt become an
honest man, & leave all thy craft
& false dealing. And thus John
Miller escaped unpunished.

¶ Holpe Skelton was in prison at the
commandement of the Cardinall.

On

Merie tales of Skelton.

Of a tyme Skeltō did meete
with certain frendes of hys,
at Charyng crosse, after that he
was in pryson at my Lord Cardy
nals cōmaūdement: & his frende
sayd. I am glad you bee abrode a
monge your frendes, for you haue
ben long pent in, Skeltō sayd: by
the masse I am glad I am out in
deede: for I haue ben pent in like
a roche of fisch, at Westminster in
pryson. The Cardinal hearing of
those words sent for him agayne.
Skelton kneling of hys knees be-
fore hym: after long cōmunicatiō
to Skelton had. Skeltō despyed
the Cardinall to graunte hym a
doun, Thou shalt haue none, sayd
the Cardynall. The assistance desi-
red that he might haue it graun-
ted, for they thought it should be
some merie pastime that he wold
We we

Merie tales of Skelton.

Before your grace. Say on thou
hore head, sayd the Cardynall to
Skelto: I pray your grace to let
me lye doune and wallow, for I
can kneele no longer.

¶ Howe the vinteners wife put water
into Skeltons wine. tale. rh.

Skelton did lous wel a cup
of good wyne. And on a
daye, he dyd make merve
in a Tauerne in Londō: and the
morrow after hee sent to the same
place againe for a quart of y^e same
wine he drunke of before, the whi
che was cleue chaunged & buyed
again. Skelto perceiuing this, he
went to the Tauerne & dyd sette
down in a chaire & dyd sygh very
fore and made great lamentacion.
The wife of the house perceiuing
this, said to master Skelto: howe
is it with you master Skelto: he
answered

Of the tales of Skelton.

answered and said: I byd neuer so euill,
and then hee byd reache an other grete
syghe, sayinge: I am afraide that I shall
neuer be saurd, no2 com to heauen, wher
said the wife, shuld you dispaire so much
in Goddes mercy: Nay said he, it is past
all remedye. Then said the wife: I dooe
praye you b2ake your mind vnto me.
Wher said Skelton I would gladly heare
you the cause of my deleur if that I will
that you would keepe my counsell. Sir
said she, I haue ben made of counsell of
greater matters then you can thew me.
Nay said Skelton, my matter passeth
all other matters, for I think I shall
sinke to hell for my great offence: for I
sent this daye to you for Wyne to saye
masse with all; and here haue a stronge
lawe that euery priest is bounde to put
into hys Chalice when he doth singe or
saye masse, some wyne and water: the
which dothe signifie the water & bloude
that byd runne oute of Chyestes syde
when Longeons the blinde knyght byd
thrust a speare to Chyestes harte: & this
daye

Merie tales of Skelton.

Daies I dyd put in water into my wyne,
when that I dyd put wine into my Cha-
lrys. Then sayd the Wintiners wife: Be
mery maister Skelton, and keepe my
counsell, for by my saythe I dyd put into
the beuell of wyne that I dyd serue you of
to day. x. gallandes of water. And ther-
fore take no thought maister Skelton for
I warraunt you. Then said Skelton:
Dams I dooe be shewe thee for thy la-
boure, for I thought so muche before: for
thoughe such vices shewyng of wyne,
maye men be deceyued, and be hurte by
drynkinge of suche euell wyne: For all
wines must be strong and sayre and
well coloured: It must haue a re-
dolent fauoure: It must be
soure and spryncklynge
in the peece or in
the glasse.

**¶ Thus endeth the merie Tales of
Maister Skelton, very plea-
sant for the recrea-
cion of the
minde.**

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